

COURSE 112 THE CALL, COST AND REWARDS OF DISCIPLESHIP
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(A Teaching Note of the Global School of Ministry, London, England & Waxahachie, Texas)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Flowing from an experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ in all the dimensions as outlined in Course 102 "Understanding Jesus Christ" the need arises to determine what kind of relationship He expects from His own. This course will present with clear detail:

- The call to discipleship of Jesus Christ, not membership of denominations, as the prime need of the Church in our generation.
- What the call is.
- In what ways and with what language did Jesus make a demand on His followers?
- What process does God expect believers to undergo to be who He wants them to be?
- How does acceptance of the call of Jesus Christ affect our previous relationships?
- What are the rewards the Lord promises those who pay the price to follow Him?

INTRODUCTION

During a mission to Rome, we saw with our spiritual and natural eyes how the personal relational gospel which came to the city from Jerusalem and Antioch was effectively substituted with a religious system. This dead religious system has two pillars on which it rests.

The first is that personal relationship with God is jettisoned for a system where people are primarily members of a physical church. This is the root of denominationalism, a critical enemy of God and His redeemed. When people are comfortable with membership of a church over and above their personal walk with God they acquire a false sense of security based on observance of religious routine and rituals which act as a sop to the human conscience. The people are thus programmed to see loyalty to the physical church as superior to their loyalty to the God who is distant.

The second pillar is that those who are in the physical church but have no vibrant personal relationship with God will, of necessity, need mediators to access the mysteries of the heavenlies for them. This is the origin of the apostate priestly caste which stands between God and men. The result of this situation is that the word of the priests is authoritative and accepted without question since the people are shielded from knowing the Bible themselves. In this state of ignorance, church folk can be manipulated to do the bidding of man rather than the will of God. People can therefore be in church and work ostensibly for God without knowing Him. See **Romans 9:1-5**; **Romans 10:1-5**. This is the sad end of legalism.

God is reforming His Church. Part of that process is to empower the people of God with the right information which will lead them to have a personal relationship with Him. Flowing from that personal relationship they are taken through a process which will enable them to enjoy intimate fellowship with God and from that stand point proceed to hear and respond to His call to service as co-labourers in His vineyard.

A. DEFINITION OF A DISCIPLE

A disciple is a Christian indeed. There is a difference between a believer and a Christian. Anyone can claim to believe based on hearing the gospel and purporting to believe in Christ. The popular scripture such people use to justify their shallow faith is **Romans 10:8-10**. That scripture however speaks of the key to enter the faith ie. faith in Christ expressed by receiving revelation of Him in the heart and confessing the same verbally. A disciple is a follower of Christ who seeks after Him and seeks to be more like Him. God, in His benevolence, made it simple to enter the Kingdom so that no one will be with excuse on the last day. It must be stressed however that God does not expect anyone who enters the Kingdom to remain at the doorstep.

Explanation

There is thus an invitation to enter into the Kingdom in its fullness. That invitation is the call to discipleship, a call which draws a believer into a life of:

1. Seeking after the Lord for a deeper, intimate relationship with Him and not for the blessings he bestows. It is a state that makes you hunger and thirst for more of Him and yet seeking more and more. You are processed daily to be like him from glory to glory, never stopping until you see Him in the ultimate glory of the hereafter - **Matthew 5:6; Philipians 3:7-14**.
2. A covenantal relationship with God rather than a casual one so that He can commission you to represent Him as His ambassador by the real anointing of the Holy Spirit that produces a transformed character and empowered witness - **Acts 1:8**.
3. Dying to self so that Christ may occupy the throne of your heart; this requires switching loyalty from yourself to Christ. In effect, it is an invitation to lose your self life at the cross and take up His own life instead as the core of your being - **Matthew 16:24–26; Galatians 2:20**.
4. Pressing into the fullness of the purpose of God in creating and redeeming you.
5. Coming to a place where Christ is the centre of your life and where you find the fullness of satisfaction in Him alone.
6. Discovering and utilising all the properties which are part of your spiritual DNA (spiritual gifts, talents, life experiences, skills acquired, education, opportunities) to declare the gospel and advance the Kingdom.

Scripture references: **Matthew 11:28–32; John 15:16; Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 6:14; 1 Peter 2:9**.

B. THE CALL: THE LANGUAGE OF JESUS CHRIST

In **Matthew 16:24–26** the Lord Jesus Christ one day turned to those who were following Him and made a rather startling demand on them. It was made in strong language which required them to respond one way or the other. Here are details of the benchmarks He laid out for those who, though called, wanted to be chosen for a more intimate relationship with Him called discipleship:

1. **“If any one”** - The Lord established clearly the fact that to be a disciple of Christ rather than a mere believer is a matter of choice. The Lord does not force people to serve Him against their own will. Even in dramatically arresting Saul on the road to Damascus, the Lord still gave Him a choice whether or not to yield to Him – **Acts 9:6**.
2. **“Desires to come after me”** - Jesus made it clear that the ultimate destination or the highest goal of the Christian life consists of coming after Him. This is to say that a true disciple is one who pursues the Lord, emulating Him in every area of their life; thoughts, words and deeds.
3. **“Let Him Deny Himself”** - Jesus here lays out a very critical condition: deny self! What is this self that should be denied? Self is the combination of the soul and the body. These two dimensions of man make up what is called the carnal nature. The carnal nature likes to be in control and hates to be vulnerable before God and men. Self likes to occupy the throne of the heart; the very place reserved for Jesus to dwell as Lord. Therefore no one can possibly be a true disciple of Christ and still be in control of their own life. A disciple is of necessity one whose will is wholly subsumed by the will of God. It leads to a state, as was once said by A.W Tozer, where the will of God becomes the dwelling place of His people.
4. **“Take up His cross”** - Discipleship also involves the conscious decision to identify with the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross is not a fanciful piece of architecture. It is the ultimate symbol of rejection, pain and suffering. The Romans reserved it for crucifying the basest of men by nailing them to the rugged cross beam and hanging man and wood on hilltops for all to see. Jesus here invites those who desire to follow Him to count the cost and decide if they really want to go further. It is a life where one is expected to make difficult choices. These are choices that may require us to be accused falsely, suffer wrongfully or be passed over in promotions we clearly deserve and yet be without sin, committing everything into the hands of He who judges righteously - **1 Peter 2:19–23**.

Another dimension of the cross that we are called to carry is that it represents the intersection of the will of God and our will. Anytime our will (the cross beam) submits to the will of God (represented by the long beam), we are in a sense, carrying our cross. Our crosses thus differ according to our individual destinies, personalities and lifestyles.

5. **“And Follow Me”** - This is an invitation to follow the Lord right up to Golgotha, the place of the skull. It is an invitation to die with Him so that He may live in and through us. Paul the Apostle puts it poignantly when he explained the secret of his outstanding life and ministry in **Galatians 2:20**. It is out of a crucified life that divinity issues out in its fullness to touch lives in a mighty measure. The devil knows that the powerful Christian life is one which is crucified and therefore wholly yielded to the will and power of God. That is why he has created and foisted on the Church another gospel which is devoid of the cross or where the cross preached is the new plastic cross rather than the old rugged cross. This other gospel causes uncrucified men to worship God for the good life He will give them and thus robs the faith of the sharp cutting edge transformed life which comes to be after a true encounter with God on the cross - **Galatians 6:14**.
6. **The critical choice: Matthew 16:25-26** – Believers have a choice to love self in this present life or to lose it in this present life and be rewarded with eternity. In other words, those who refuse to pay the price and chose not to die to self may seemingly “enjoy” life now for a short season, only to discover their grand folly when they face the prospect of eternity outside of Christ in hell. The uncrucified life will always gravitate to sin and sin will always separate man from God. It is therefore clear that embracing the old rugged cross and allowing our carnal nature to be crucified until none of its motions oppress us is the only viable option. At the cross deliverance that comes from being sincere before God takes place until nothing defiling lurks within the human persona.

Of a truth, God extends this call to all who purport to receive Christ as Lord and Saviour. The Saviour is He who will guarantee that souls do not perish in hell's eternal fire. On the other hand, the Lord is He who will rule your life and determine what you say, think and do. Unfortunately, there are many who receive Jesus as Saviour but shrink back from enthroning Him as Lord. Consequently they miss an essential principle: Jesus can only guarantee a place in heaven as Saviour to only those who have submitted to His Lordship on planet earth.

Hence we establish the truth that every believer is called to be a disciple of Christ. It is not an option reserved for a few in a priestly caste. The gospel programme is about producing disciples of Jesus Christ rather than mere believers who lack commitment. The Great Commission is not a game of statistical manipulation or seeking to pull crowds into the Church. It is rather a continuum which begins with leading people to receive Christ in their heart as Saviour and a life long process of enthroning and maintaining Him as the Lord of their lives. This is the principal objective of the teaching ministry. The Word of God is thus applied systematically as food to nourish the inner man to maturity in Christ. **Matthew 28:18–20; Matthew 6:24–34; 1 Peter 2:9**. As many as respond to the Call of Jesus thereby secure for themselves due consideration as the chosen ones - **Matthew 20:16**. Those who will stay on course until the end are deemed as the faithful. **Revelation 17:14** gives us a profile of those who will make it to the end: the **called, chosen and faithful**. It is a matter of response, anchored on the will of an individual. May we all be part of that number.

C. HOW DO YOU KNOW THE CALL ON AN EXPERIENTIAL LEVEL?

1. As a believer you become dissatisfied with the routine life.
2. You have an understanding that the pursuit of the things of this world is vanity and therefore you no longer derive your validity and satisfaction from them.
3. You sense a void deep within you that needs to be filled.
4. You realise that there is a higher purpose for which God created and redeemed you that you need to pursue and fulfil.
5. You realise that there are deposits of grace in you which are not yet utilised or fully utilised.
6. You receive specific messages from God by revelation (prophecy, dreams, visions, discernment), by quickening of the Word, by impression in your heart or by having a burden which leads you to seek Him to a greater degree.

7. The Lord orders your steps into a programme like the Global School of Ministry where you are challenged to release yourself to Him wholly to be processed into ministry.

D. RESPONDING TO THE CALL OF GOD FOR DISCIPLESHIP - THE COST INVOLVED

One familiar trick of Satan is to suggest to some Christians that they are not called. In doing this the enemy uses a religious mindset to equate discipleship with living a monastic life in a dour, religious order. Such minds are filled with pictures of religious priests built on the Old Testament model. In this model there is a dichotomy between a small, professional clergy and a large laity based on a pulpit versus pew division of the Church. This is a clever trick of the enemy to keep the huge reservoir of manpower in the church frozen in the pews.

The Lord will have His Church utilise the abundant manpower that ought to be discipled and released into the vineyard. The Lord wants us to realise that no one is in the Kingdom by accident and that none is useless. Every true Christian is joined to the Body by the Holy Spirit and invested with peculiar gifts which are to be released to edify other saints. Every saint is called to be a disciple of Christ and should emulate Him in one vital area of their life: serving one another.

Scripture references: **Romans 12:1–8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:7–16; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Peter 4:10-11.**

The cost of discipleship that only a few are willing to pay in each generation

1. The choice to respond to the Call of the Lord.
2. The willingness to follow the Lord wholly, without reservations.
3. The choice to allow the Word of the Lord to renew the mind and change the perspective so that one can apprehend spiritual truth and yield to His demand for Lordship - **Romans 12:2.**
4. The choice to dethrone the self life and yield it up wholly to be crucified with Christ - **Matthew 16:24; Romans 12:1; Galatians 2:20.**
5. The wilful embrace of a Christ centred life which is no longer driven by pursuit of material things but pursuit of the Lord Himself.
6. The wilful offering up of our beings as the Lord's bondservants whose entire pleasure is to do His will - **Psalms 50:5; Matthew 11:28–32.**

It all comes down to one critical point – personal decision. Ultimately every Christian has the privilege of exercising their will either in favour of accepting or rejecting the call of the Lord for discipleship.

E. HOW DOES ANSWERING THE CALL AFFECT PREVIOUS BONDS OF RELATIONSHIP?

In **Matthew 10:32-39** it details out the choices that an intending disciple must make. Those choices include enthroning God to such a degree that every other relationship takes second place: parent, children, spouses, friends, career and even life itself. A disciple must therefore make a conscious decision to give Christ the prime place in his or her heart. In doing so blessings and eternal life are promised – **Matthew 19:29.**

F. THE REWARDS OF TRUE DISCIPLES

God is an equitable personality. He never makes a demand on people without commensurate rewards or punishments attached thereto. These are some of the rewards that lie in store for true disciples:

1. **A life of true liberty in Christ** with freedom from the bondage of the flesh (soul and body) which makes many Christians carnal.
2. **A life free from the pressure of materialism and acquisitiveness.** This is the blessedness of owning nothing yet having all in Christ. One is freed from participation in the rat race of life and constantly being in the fast lane.
3. **A Christ centred, Christ honouring lifestyle** wherein His yoke gives true rest to the soul and the joy of the Lord becomes the hidden strength of His people - **Matthew 11:28–30; John 15:1–7; Nehemiah 8:10; Isaiah 12:3.**

4. **The privilege of being a son of God**, mature enough to hear His voice and being led of the Holy Spirit - **Romans 8:1-17**.
5. **The blessed life of seeking, discovering and fulfilling the very purpose** for which one was created and redeemed - **Jeremiah 29:11**.
6. **Productivity in serving the Lord** as His witness and co-labourer - **John 15:16**.
7. **The privilege of constant access to God in prayer** with an uncluttered heart that is pure - **Psalm 15:1-5; Psalm 24:3-6; Matthew 5:8; Hebrews 12:14; 1 John 5:14-15**.
8. **Trust and Faith in God** which yields up all that He has provided, out of His faithfulness, for His servants to be without lack and for their needs to be met - **Deuteronomy 28:1-13; Psalm 37:25-26; Matthew 6:24-34; Matthew 19:29; Philippians 4:19; 2 Peter 1:3**.
9. **Eternal rewards** in the hereafter for souls won - **Matthew 19:29; 2 Timothy 4:8**.

Questions

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1. **Email:** To receive this Teaching Note in Word format or as a PDF document send a request to globalschool123@gmail.com. Apostles George, Apostle Tony and Minister Patricia Talbott are on hand to respond promptly.
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Teaching: Course 113 – Personal Spiritual Growth and Maturity

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